



ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
201st MILITARY INTELLIGENCE BATTALION
BLDG 2264, STANLEY ROAD
FORT SAM HOUSTON, TEXAS 78234-5000

REPLY TO



IASA-201-CDR

29 September 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Family Support Group

1. References.

- a. DA Pamphlet 608-47, Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups
- b. AR 600-20, Army Command Policy
- c. The Army FRG Leader's Handbook

2. Purpose. To provide guidance when establishing Family Readiness group activities within 201st Military Intelligence Battalion.

3. Mission. The primary goal of our family support group is to support our military mission through provision of support, outreach, and information to family members and soldiers. The family support group is a recognized organization of family members and soldiers belonging to this unit, who together provide an avenue of mutual support and assistance, and a network of communication among the family members, the chain of command, and community resources

4. Commander's Intent. To establish a Family Readiness Group for the Battalion, in order to anticipate and addresses the needs of the Battalion soldiers and their families when a temporary separation occurs through orientation programs, FRG newsletters, pre-deployment briefings, family assistance handbooks, and social functions.

Steps To Take Right Away

- 1) Get an appointment letter from the company commander naming you as the FRG Leader. You will need this for the bank, and just to show that you have been appointed.
- 2) Ask your commander for a list of ALL spouses and family members in the unit, including phone numbers, mailing addresses and e-mail addresses, if they have them on file. This can be obtained from their rosters or from their soldier database. If this is not frequently updated, ask your commander to update it now during NCO time, End of Day Formation, or even during a urinalysis. This may take them some time, so proceed to other steps while they work on this.
- 3) Discuss with your commander what he or she would like to see in the FRG, what programs have been going on and any other info they may have for you. Your FRG Advisor for your unit may have info to give you, such as a continuity book containing past meeting agendas, unit newsletters, and phone trees, and help you set up for FRG training and AFTB classes.
- 4) Set a date within the next 2 weeks to host an informal planning session to discuss the future of the FRG. Openly invite all spouses to attend. The mini-meeting can be held at the company area or an FRG building. Reserve your location. This informal meeting is just to test the waters to see what has been done in the past, how people felt about things, where they'd like to see the FRG go in the future, and discuss any ideas they may have.

Prior to Informal Planning Session

- 1) Review any available FRG information to see what has been done in the past. This will help you discover all the programs currently in place, what volunteers may have been helping, what date your FRG has been meeting on, and other details. If you have NO prior info, then review your notes about what the Commander wants to have happen, write down some notes about what you'd like to see in the unit and browse through the frg.army.mil website for other bits of inspiration.
- 2) Print up a flyer for the Orderly Room announcing the informal meeting and its purpose, and have the 1SG announce this meeting at End of Day formations.
- 3) If you have received your social roster from the commander, start an e-mail distro list on your e-mail system. Be sure to keep all e-mail addresses private and use blind courtesy copy (bcc) whenever possible. Many e-mail programs may not allow distro lists to go over 50 names, so you may need to break it into 2 or 3 smaller distros, separating by platoon or by whether they are living in the area or out of the area.
- 4) Use your new distro to invite all spouses to the informal gathering to help plan the future of the FRG. Make it sound fun, be sure to let them know you want their opinions and want their expertise for this planning session!
- 5) If your unit only has the mailing address for family members, you can send out a letter of introduction to let everyone know of the change. Encourage them to e-mail you and provide you with their e-mail address and other contact info.
- 6) Print out descriptions of FRG programs currently in place and the calendar with suggested FRG meeting themes.
- 7) Print off position descriptions for Treasurer, Hospitality Chairperson, Secretary, Phone Tree volunteers, Fundraising Chair and Social Committee Chair.
- 8) Get Avery #5095 nametags or Avery #5164 mailing labels from the company supply office or from your Commander. These nametags can be printed on your computer to have the unit's name on them and the title "FRG Member" at the bottom to show that EVERY person at the meeting has the same rank.
- 9) Create a sign-in sheet for the meeting, including check boxes for volunteer interests.

Hosting the Informal Planning Session

- 1) Place nametags and some pens at the front table to be sure that everyone receives one. Invite people to come in, grab a drink and sit down.
- 2) Introduce yourself as the new FRG Leader. Give a little background and bio and what FRG positions you've had before.
- 3) State your FRG's basic rules—"There is NO rank in an FRG. There is NO gossip. All ideas and opinions have validity and all will be heard." Print this out in a sign format if necessary to make sure everyone knows the ground rules.
- 4) Ask each member in attendance to introduce themselves and what area of the company their soldier works in. Ask them to give 2 things they'd like to see their FRG do in the future. Make notes of their suggestions.
- 5) Review previous FRG programs with attendees. Ask for their feedback after each program is mentioned. If there were no programs, propose a few and ask for their feedback. Programs can include delivering meals to new mothers, providing a baby gift for new babies, creating a brochure with useful numbers, creating business card magnets with important unit numbers, sending flowers to funerals, starting, fundraising events, starting a phone tree and POC program.
- 6) Pass around job descriptions and discuss the positions with FRG members. Don't ask for a commitment now, just ask that they keep the volunteer positions in mind.
- 7) Pass around your sign-in sheet and a pen for people to write down their info. You need to collect their names, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and have a section where people can check off any interests they may have for volunteer positions—treasurer, fundraising, hospitality, event planning, phone tree caller/ POC. You can ask them to put a star (*) in the box if they are interested in heading up this activity or being on the committee, and a check mark if they are willing to volunteer for this committee as needed.
- 8) Thank them for attending the informal planning session! Inform them that you will be in touch soon to let them know the date of the First FRG Meeting.

Now, you have a good start to getting some things going in your new FRG! You have received the social roster, set up your bank account, hosted an informal planning session with some FRG members, and you have a good idea of where your FRG currently stands and a map for your future! Congratulate yourself on a job well started! You are definitely out of the fire and back into the frying pan now!

Before your First FRG Meeting

- 1) Set the date for the meeting and reserve the room you need. You may need to discuss the date with your Company Commander to make sure there are no activities or field exercises that evening. Many units have a date assigned to them based on availability of the FRG Building or other meeting rooms. If this date conflicts with your Commander's time frame, you may need to adjust your meeting day or use another location on post.
- 2) Find a speaker for the meeting, if necessary. Your FRG Advisor may be able to help you locate a speaker. Having a speaker takes some of the pressure off the FRG Leader from having to do the entire meeting alone, including researching a topic, finding handouts and bringing props.
- 3) E-mail your FRG members to announce the FRG meeting's date, time, and location. Include a brief note about the speaker or subject of the meeting, whether childcare or food/ snacks/ potluck will be provided, and a map or directions to the location, even if it's just the Company Area. Many spouses may not know how to get to the company area, so be clear in your directions, where to park, and even what door to enter through.
- 4) Print off a flyer for the FRG Meeting and post it in the Orderly Room. You can also print out small postcard sized handouts for the soldiers to take home to their spouses.
- 5) Create a sign-up potluck list if needed, and have it posted at least one week in advance of the meeting.
- 6) Attend your Higher Headquarters Steering Committee meeting to learn about all the info you need to present to your FRG at your meeting. Take good notes and collect all handouts.
- 7) Create an agenda for the meeting and a sign in sheet.
- 8) Make copies of the agenda and any handouts given out at the Steering Committee meeting.
- 9) Print off checklist for what to bring to an FRG meeting.
- 10) Print off New FRG Member Info Sheets.
- 11) Print off surveys of interests for FRG meetings.
- 12) Send a reminder e-mail 2 days before the FRG meeting.

Hosting your First FRG Meeting

Keep your meeting short and to the point. Allow for a Q&A session at the end. Once the meeting is over, invite people to stick around for some refreshments and chatting. By putting the chatting session at the end, people on a time crunch can come for the informational portion and duck out at the end.

- 1) Put the sign-in sheet prominently at the front of the room. Add nametags and pens. Invite everyone who enters to sign in and take a seat.
- 2) Pass out agendas, company calendar and handouts. Include an FRG Member Info Sheet to make sure you have everyone's contact info.
- 3) Introduce yourself and your bio. You've already done this in front of a small group of people, so it should be even easier now!
- 4) Follow your agenda, highlighting important events coming up. Introduce your speaker, if you have one.
- 5) Pass around the previously used Volunteer Opportunities sign-in sheet for people to check their interests for volunteering.
- 6) Solicit questions for the Commander and FRG Leader.
- 7) While questions are being asked, pass around interest surveys for everyone to fill out. Collect all forms before people leave.
- 8) Thank everyone for attending tonight. Give out the door prize if you have one— it could be a free PT pass, the CO's parking space during PT tomorrow, or a donated gift certificate.

After the First FRG Meeting

- 1) Send out a recap e-mail to ALL FRG members on your distro, including your agenda, your calendar, any upcoming events you may have planned, and any handouts you may have electronic copies of. Thank the FRG members for attending and for giving their input!
- 2) Keep one copy of the agenda and all handouts along with the sign-in sheet for your FRG's Continuity Book.
- 3) Send the leftover agendas, handouts and calendars to the Company Orderly Room to be put on the front desk for soldiers to browse through.
- 4) Review all the names of those interested in volunteering for different positions. Discuss the volunteers with the Company Commander and invite the selected volunteers to be the committee chairs or phone tree KEY CALLERS.
- 5) Schedule the date and room for your next FRG meeting next month.
- 6) Review the interest surveys and select one meeting theme that several FRG members liked, or base it on a holiday theme.
- 7) Schedule a speaker for next month.
- 8) Fill out the rest of your FRG meeting calendar with other themes that interested your members. Add in holiday themes, too.

Whew! Congratulations on getting this far! You're well on your way to creating an awesome FRG and you should be proud for taking these initial steps! As time permits, you can move on to these next steps. You'll want to consider your unit's deployment schedule, your capability to get volunteers as well as your duties with the FRG and your own personal life to figure out which order will be best for you. We've provided some basic guidelines and notions to think about as you move through these next steps. Your FRG members may decide that one of these items listed is not something they are interested in doing or having in their program (such as a unit newsletter, hosting craft nights or providing gifts to new babies born into your unit). If it's something you feel passionate about, then state that you will put that issue off for 6 months at which time the FRG will re-evaluate the program's potential and decide whether it's something you'd like to take on at that time. No idea is lost forever.

Volunteers

Hopefully, you will have received some positive results from your informal planning meeting and your first FRG meeting and you will now have a few names of interested volunteers. Contact the family members that you and the commander have discussed to offer them the position within the committee.

- 1) Once you have a few key personnel, others will join in as they see the progress the FRG is making.
- 2) Keep things moving along with positive reinforcement, thank you notes and public recognition at FRG meetings. Some recognition items can be inexpensive items, such as a Kudos granola bar to say "kudos" to a great volunteer. Thank you notes can be hand delivered at FRG meetings, or mailed to the individual.
- 3) Send volunteers to training through Army Community Services programs on post. They have specific classes for CARE Teams, fundraising, phone tree/ rosters, and secretary duties, among others.
- 4) Keep track of volunteer hours so that they can be formally recognized for their efforts. These hours are reported to your local Volunteer Center on post. The post can receive money from the Army for their volunteer hours. This is also helpful when a volunteer wants to use this info on a resume', or is being given an award. When asking for extra volunteers for a one-time event, have a committee member contact a person directly to ask for a time commitment of 1 hour and give some time slots available. This will help narrow down people rather than blindly asking for help and getting no response. People are more apt to commit to a one-time event when they know it has a start and an ending time.

Treasurer's Folder

- 1) First and foremost, all FRG money is owned by the Battalion and maintained by the Battalion Commander and a Committee appointed by him. Next, get together with your Treasurer to start a Treasurer's Folder.
- 2) 1/3 of all Battalion money goes to the FRG.
- 3) Bring all receipts and bank statements to the Treasurer.

Create a Phone Tree

Enlist the help of approximately 10 family members in your unit to act as KEY CALLERS for the FRG. These people will be the ones to call 7 to 10 people in times of alert, to announce an FRG meeting, or just to activate the roster to make sure it's working properly. They are also the ones the family members will call instead of the FRG Leader to ask routine questions. It's important that you pick people who are not prone to gossip, who can maintain confidentiality and will take the job seriously. Again, there should be training for this position on your local post.

Provide Ongoing Support

One amazing way to provide ongoing support to your FRG members without having to answer dozens of phone calls is to provide them with the resources they will need in advance! This includes providing them with an FRG brochure listing all unit phone numbers and POCs, creating magnet business cards with important phone numbers, and providing flip charts or other lists of phone numbers where they can find the needed info themselves. This will greatly free up the FRG Leader's time from answering easy questions about services on post.

- ❑ Create a unit brochure in Word, Publisher or other desktop editing program.
- ❑ Create business cards with unit's name, Orderly Room numbers, FRG Leader's contact info, time and date of regular monthly meetings, and the FRG Liaison/ Assistant (paid position).
- ❑ Create a brochure or an information contact card that lists important FRG numbers in your area that are vital for family members to have on hand. This info is usually produced by ACS or MWR.

CARE Team (Casualty Response Team)

A CARE Team assists the family of a soldier during a tragedy. This could include the loss or injury of the soldier or a family member. The CARE Team will assist for the first few days after the notification, helping care for children, providing meals, maintaining the house and chores, while providing support to the family.

- 1) The FRG Advisor directs and trains CARE Teams. Work with your advisor to help set up the CARE Team.
- 2) Recruit volunteers to join the CARE Team. A CARE Team is a group of volunteers who are able to assist a family on a moment's notice. Volunteers must be discreet and are able to maintain privacy. Please choose responsible individuals in your FRG to serve on this team.
- 3) Send volunteers to CARE Team training on post through ACS' Soldier and Family Readiness Branch.
- 4) Prepare a kit to take with you, including a calendar (eg. to help write down dates when paperwork is due for benefits), a visitor's log, phone call log, a personal journal, an activity/ coloring book and crayons for children in the home, tissues, and any other items you feel would be useful to a family going through a rough time.

Create a Welcome Packet

This packet of info will welcome both single and married soldiers into your unit. Inside this packet the FRG will provide a post map (usually provided by the PX), a welcome letter, a sample unit newsletter, a survey (one for single soldiers and one for married soldiers), as well as the FRG brochure. The Company Commander may also include a strip map of the buildings in your unit's area to help familiarize them with PT fields, parking areas, barracks, dining halls and Orderly Rooms of companies in the unit. This packet will be given to the soldier when they in process at the Orderly Room. In addition to the welcome packet, some units offer a welcome at the first FRG meeting. Here's a sample of a postcard sized tag attached to a pot of African Violets to be given to all new spouses at their first FRG meeting.

Ask the Commander to create a system where the FRG Leader is informed via e-mail when a new soldier in processes and when soldiers leave the company. Many database systems can create this automatically, such as the one found on AKO (Webbis/ Matrix).

Create a Continuity Book

This book is also called a Management Book. Essentially, it is a list of protocols on how the FRG is run. This will include the chain of concern in the FRG (listing of Committee chairs and the FRG Leader along with their contact info), the phone tree, the appointment orders for each position, FRG meeting minutes/ agendas from previous year, Company FRG SOP signed by Company Commander, Battalion Bylaws signed by Battalion Commander, and the Treasurer's Report. This is the type of book that you would have liked to receive when you took over an FRG. Use labeled dividers and tabs to easily locate the info within your book.

We hope this list of steps will help make things easier for you as you start an FRG or fix a broken one. This list is not exhaustive, and there may be programs your FRG might want to do differently. An FRG is made up of family members who all have different interests and needs. You will be the best one to determine those needs and act on them accordingly. We wish you good luck with taking on these steps and extend an invitation to you to ask for help from the community at <http://frg.army.mil> whenever you need it. We have experienced FRG Leaders who have taken on many tasks within our organizations, and we're here to help!

JOHN J. STRYCULA
LTC, MI
Commanding

Encls

1. Family Readiness Group Volunteer Position Description

DISTRIBUTION:

Cdr, HHD Co.

Cdr, A Co.

Cdr, B Co.

S1

Chaplain

FRG Advisor

FRG Leaders/Co leaders

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: FRG Advisor

RESPONSIBLE TO: Battalion Commander

PURPOSE: Provide mentorship/guidance to the FRG Leader and Committee Chairpersons.

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

- Supports the commander's family readiness goals.
- Serves on FRG steering committee; may also chair the committee.
- Provides guidance and support to the FRG Leader.
- Fields specific family readiness problems and discusses them with steering committee.
- Gathers and disseminates information on activities at the battalion level and above.
- Delegates FRG issues to senior spouses for resolution.
- Acts as a unit FRG spokesperson for communicating family members' concerns and ideas to the commander.
- Puts together and trains CARE teams

TIME REQUIRED:

- 5 to 10 hours per month (depending scheduled activities).
- One year commitment.

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Knowledge of family readiness programs, unit structure and procedures, and post agencies and services
- Ability to work well with others especially steering committee members and unit FRG leaders.

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- ACS FRG Training
- AFTB Levels I-III
- Volunteer training and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: FRG Leader

RESPONSIBLE TO: Unit Commander

PURPOSE: Organize and lead the Company's FRG

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

- Supports the commander's family readiness goals.
- Provides overall leadership for the FRG.
- Works together with the FRG Advisor in order to accomplish FRG goals.
- Recruits other volunteers to serve on FRG committees.
- Recognize FRG volunteers, new babies and welcome newcomers.
- Delegates FRG responsibilities to selected volunteers as committee chairpersons.
- Serves as a member of the steering committee.
- Identifies needs or unique problems of unit families.
- Acts as unit FRG spokesperson for communicating family members' concerns and ideas to the company commander.

TIME REQUIRED:

- Six to eight hours a week (depending on scheduled activities).
- One year commitment.

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Knowledge of family readiness programs, unit structure and procedures, and post agencies and services.
- Ability to work well with others.

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- ACS FRG Training
- AFTB Levels I-III
- Volunteer training and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: FRG Secretary

RESPONSIBLE TO: FRG Leader

PURPOSE:

- Maintain accurate minutes of meetings.
- Distribute information and correspondence to unit soldiers and spouses for FRG Leader.

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

- Maintains a FRG binder with a calendar, current Chain of Concern roster, sign-in sheets, agendas and minutes.
- Updates the contact roster with telephone numbers of new arrivals and reports changes to the FRG Leader.

TIME REQUIRED:

- Approximately 10 hours per month.
- One year commitment.

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Ability to take accurate notes and keep records.
- Well organized.

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- ACS FRG Training
- AFTB Levels I-III
- Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: FRG Treasurer

RESPONSIBLE TO: Battalion Commander

PURPOSE: Serve as custodian for the FRG informal fund

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

- Obtains appointment letter from the commander.
- Sets up fund account at local bank.
- Maintains FRG fund records and ledger; keeps it up to date at all times.
- Receives and accounts for all funds submitted from fundraisers; prepares deposit slips, and deposits funds into the FRG account.
- Disburses checks in accordance with battalion commander's guidance.
- Reviews monthly bank statements and reconciles with ledger; calls bank about any unexplained discrepancies.
- Reads financial summary aloud at FRG steering meetings.

TIME REQUIRED:

- 10 hours per month (depending on activity frequency).
- One year commitment.

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Knowledge of banking procedures
- Good math skills
- Well organized
- Ability to work well with others

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- ACS FRG Training
- Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: FRG Newsletter Editor

RESPONSIBLE TO: Battalion Commander

PURPOSE: Publishes the Battalion FRG Newsletter

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

- Supports the commander's family readiness goals.
- Determines level of interest of FRG members in having a newsletter; discusses with commander the scope and topics of newsletter.
- Organizes a volunteer newsletter staff (reporters, writers, editors, typists, illustrators, collators, mailers as necessary).
- Designs newsletter and logo—gets input from members.
- Oversees gathering of information from all sources; organizes, writes, and edits material.
- Provides copies of draft newsletters to commander for editing.

TIME REQUIRED:

- 20 hours per quarter (depending on newsletter frequency).
- One year commitment.

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Editorial, spelling, grammar skills; ability to write articles.
- Managerial skills; knowledge of organization.
- Creativity, energy, artistic talent.

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- ACS FRG Training
- Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: Activities Chairperson

RESPONSIBLE TO: FRG Leader

PURPOSE: Plan, organize, and execute FRG activities and special events.

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

- Supports the commander's family readiness goals.
- Solicits FRG members' ideas and interests about fun events they would like the FRG to plan.
- Discusses proposed events with FRG and unit leadership.
- Recruits other volunteers to help with event details; checks the unit training schedule; agrees on date, location, etc.
- Establishes committees for the event and brainstorms needs.
- Coordinates financial needs with FRG leadership, treasurer, and fundraiser chairperson.
- Ensures that desired location is available the day of the event.
- Coordinates with the newsletter chairperson to advertise the event.
- Supervises the planning sessions and completes event planning.
- Coordinates with commander or first sergeant to arrange for single soldiers to help with decorations and other tasks.
- Meets at intervals with committee chairpersons to ensure that all necessary preparations are in place.
- Supervises the execution of the event; monitors activities to ensure the event is on schedule.

TIME REQUIRED:

- 10 hours per month (depending on event frequency).
- One year commitment.

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Enthusiasm and energy.
- Positive leadership traits.
- Good knowledge of recreational opportunities on and off post.
- Organizational ability.

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- ACS FRG Training
- AFTB Levels I-III
- Similar courses and/or past experience.

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: Fundraiser Chairperson

RESPONSIBLE TO: FRG Leader

PURPOSE: Manage FRG fundraising activities

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

- Coordinates with FRG Leader and Activities Chairperson on upcoming events and financial needs.
- Coordinates with commander or first sergeant on training schedule and open times for fundraisers.
- Canvasses membership about types of fundraisers desired.
- Coordinates with commander about proposed fundraiser(s).
- Prepares fundraiser permission letter and delivers to FRG Leader.
- Works with FRG Leader to publicize upcoming fundraiser.
- Complies with Army regulations and post rules.
- Works with fundraiser committee to plan the fundraiser.
- Recruits volunteers and delegates duties.
- Supervises the fundraiser on the appointed day.
- Safeguards funds and turns them over to the treasurer or alternate as soon as possible.
- Reports fundraiser results to FRG Leader and membership.

TIME REQUIRED:

- 10 hours per month (depending on scheduled activities).
- One year commitment

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Knowledge of fundraising regulations.
- Excellent leadership traits—works well with other.

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- ACS FRG Training
- Similar courses and/or past experience